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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 04/25/07

- 1) Top headlines
- 2) Editorials
- 3) Prime Minister's daily schedule

US beef:

- 4) US likely to be on offensive, Japan's food safety committee to take time
- 5) Washington, Tokyo come around with Bush-Abe meeting just around the corner
- 6) US accepts Japanese inspections
- 7) US agrees to inspect meatpackers, but MAFF delays announcement

US-Japan ties:

- 8) Japan to assist US with atomic power plant construction
- 9) LDP group cancels US visit

Defense & security agenda:

- 10) Yokosuka, MOFA officials to visit US naval facility in Washington State to see N-energy disaster drill
- 11) Aegis data proliferated from MSDF service school instructor
- 12) Japan, US, China to participate in joint drills

Futenma:

- 13) Japan to uphold Futenma accord
- 14) Gov't preparing to probe sea for Futenma relocation

Iraq mission:

- 15) Iraq bill enters into Diet deliberation
- 16) Over 80% of ASDF airlifts in Iraq for multinational coalition

forces

Political topics & G-8 ministerial scenesetting:

17) Gov't eyes reinterpreting Japan's top law for collective self-defense

18) Prime Minister Abe mad at Asahi Shimbun magazine article over Nagasaki shooting

19) Japan to host G-8 ministerial meetings in local cities

Articles:

1) TOP HEADLINES

Asahi:

FTC to investigate forest road projects ordered by Forestry Agency, focusing on possibility of amakudari

Mainichi:

Cabinet approves bill amending Civil Service Law, which provides for prime minister's responsibility for monitoring illegalities

Yomiuri:

Five postal companies project 587 billion yen profit in FY2011

Nihon Keizai:

Government writes off 12 trillion yen in process of special corporations reorganized into independent ones with no clear-cut explanation

Sankei:

Aegis data leak: MSDF lieutenant distributed copies to more than 30 students

TOKYO 00001843 002 OF 012

Tokyo Shimbun:

More than 80% of ASDF mission in Iraq is transportation of coalition forces

Akahata:

Many call for caution in public hearings on constitutional revision

2) EDITORIALS

Asahi:

(1) National standardized tests: Efforts needed not to widen gaps in academic capabilities

(2) Yeltsin stopped history from moving backward

Mainichi:

(1) Prime minister's visit to US: Solid Japan-US ties should be confirmed

(2) Death of Yeltsin: Cold relations between US, Russia worrisome

Yomiuri:

(1) Yeltsin played role in dismantling Soviet Union

(2) Each party should present specific measures to rectify tax, income gaps before Upper House election

Nihon Keizai:

(1) Conduct probing debate led by cabinet on restrictions on amakudari

(2) Yeltsin played important role

Sankei:

(1) Death of Yeltsin: Follow his spirit of law and justice

(2) Death of Lucie Blackman: Japanese police's ability being questioned

Tokyo Shimbun:

(1) Prime minister's first visit to US: Make efforts to cement bilateral relations

(2) Death of Yeltsin: Uncompleted revolution must be continued

Akahata:

(1) Extension of Iraq Special Measures Law runs counter to growing

calls for US troops' withdrawal

3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, April 24

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 25, 2007

08:16

Met with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shimomura at Kantei.

09:01

Attended a cabinet meeting in Diet. Foreign Minister Aso remained.  
After Aso, met with Agriculture Minister Matsuoka.

09:18

Met with MLIT Minister Fuyushiba, and later met with Finance  
Minister Omi.

09:58

TOKYO 00001843 003 OF 012

Made an informal representation to the Emperor at Imperial Palace.

11:03

Met with Deputy Foreign Minister Yabunaka, North American Affairs  
Bureau Director-General Nishinomiya, Economic Affairs Bureau  
Director-General Odabe, and International Cooperation Bureau  
Director-General Bessho and others at Kantei.

11:56

Met with members of the champion basketball team Osaka Evessa,  
joined by LDP Secretary General Nakagawa and others. Nakagawa  
remained.

13:02

Attended a Lower House plenary session.

14:44

Handed the LDP's certificate of official endorsement to a candidate  
expected to run in an Upper House seat in Yamagata Constituency,  
joined by Nakagawa and House of Councilors member Aoki.

15:31

Responded to an interview with the US CNN TV, together with his wife  
Akie.

16:37

Attended a meeting of the Council for Science and Technology  
Policy.

18:00

Attended an "LDP gathering for promotion of creating a new  
constitution of Japan" held at Kudan Kaikan Hall.

19:32

Attended a special cabinet meeting at Kantei.

19:58

Met with journalist Yoshiko Sakurai and others at Kantei.

4) Beef offensive bound to come; US beef import conditions to be  
eased

ASAHI (Page 9) (Excerpts)  
April 25, 2007

The issue of the US calling on Japan to ease its US beef import  
conditions will enter a new stage with its accepting inspections of  
its meat-processing facilities by Japanese experts. The US has urged  
Japan to ease its import condition that limits beef eligible for  
exports to cattle aged 20 months or younger to 30 months or younger.  
However, a cautious view is deep-seated in Japan. The US is bound to  
heighten pressure on Japan at government-to-government talks, which  
will become active.

It will take time for Food Safety Commission to reach conclusion

The Japanese government has taken the position that talks will not progress unless the US accepts Japan's request for inspections of US meatpackers. However, now that the US has accepted the request, Japan will find the easing of its import condition as a pressing issue.

TOKYO 00001843 004 OF 012

If inspections confirm that US meat-processing facilities are observing export guidelines as agreed on between the two countries, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) will end its guidance given to importers to conduct blanket inspections of US beef boxes. Further, if it is determined through inspections that BSE preventive measures, such as one to prevent BSE from getting into feed, are fully functioning, the government will likely start procedures for easing import conditions.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) Minister Matsuoka during a press conference yesterday noted that the government would follow domestic procedures based on the latest scientific knowledge. He thus indicated the outlook that if the US makes a formal request once it is recognized as a quasi-safe country, the government will consult the Food Safety Commission of the Cabinet Office about the propriety of easing the import condition.

However, it will take time for the panel to reach a decision. In addition, the MHLW is cautious about the idea of easing the import condition, while MAFF is taking a flexible stance. Views in government circles are thus not in unity. Even if the government has undergone procedures for easing the import condition, friction between the two countries could recur with the US side complaining, "Japan is trying to gain time," if the US becomes dissatisfied with the slow progress.

5) Japan, US found common ground: US to accept beef inspections by Japan; Japan to discuss possibility of easing import conditions

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 5) (Full)  
April 25, 2007

Discussions on the easing of import conditions imposed on US beef have gotten underway. The agriculture ministers of Japan and the US during their recent telephone conversation agreed that the US would comply with Japan's request to inspect meatpackers exporting products to Japan. Japan on its part will consult the Food Safety Commission about a possible revision of its import guidelines, based on the premise that an international organization will recognize the US BSE preventive measures as safe. Japan's move is apparently intended to quell a source of bilateral contention prior to the bilateral summit.

Japan resumed US beef imports last summer. However, the US had rejected future inspections of its meat-processing facilities by Japan. It has also urged Japan to scrap its import criterion that limits products beef eligible for exports to cattle aged 20 months or younger. Behind the US move is the fact that though Japan has started importing US beef, the import volume remains below the pre-ban level, giving rise to growing dissatisfaction in the US beef industry. The import volume of US beef remains at 10% of the pre-ban level. The age limit is also hampering shipments.

Following the agreement this time, voices noting that European countries usually set the age limit at 30 months or younger are beginning to be heard in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Coordination of views on the US beef import issue will likely be undertaken with the possibility of expanding the eligible cattle age bracket. In conjunction with this move, the government will also look into the possibility of taking a second look at the present domestic BSE inspection system, which is applied to cattle aged 21 months or older.

TOKYO 00001843 005 OF 012

The aim of making concessions prior to the summit is to prevent the beef issue from becoming politicized so as not to incur opposition from the public and industrial organizations. Japan and the US have thus found a common ground. However, anxieties about and public distrust in the safety of US beef have yet to be wiped away.

6) US agrees to allow Japanese inspections of beef exporters

SANKEI (Page 11) (Excerpts)  
April 25, 2007

The government announced yesterday that the United States has agreed to accept Japan's request on Japanese inspections of US meatpacking plants. Under the agreement, if no problem is found in the inspections, Japan will discontinue its requirement of checking every box of beef shipped from US plants. The agreement would pave the way for Japan to ease its condition of importing only beef from cattle 20 months of age or younger. The beef row will not emerge as a major issue at the upcoming bilateral summit on April 27.

7) US accepts inspection of meat-processing facilities: Heightening pressure for eased age limit

MAINICHI (Page 9) (Excerpts)  
April 25, 2007

Now that the US has decided to allow Japan to inspect its meat-processing facilities, the focus of the US beef import issue will shift to what course discussions on the easing of Japan's import condition will take. The US has called for the scrapping of the age criterion that limits beef eligible for exports to cattle aged 20 months or younger. However, there is the possibility of such a move meeting opposition in Japan. The issue is expected to encounter difficulties.

Agreement released after four days

According to Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) Minister Toshikatsu Matsuoka, the agreement in principle on the implementation of such inspection was reached on April 20 during his telephone talks with US Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns. However, Vice MAFF Minister Yoshio Kobayashi told a news conference on the 23rd, "No agreement was reached on the implementation of inspections. The talks ended in failure." There was a discrepancy in the statements by Matsuoka and Kobayashi, leaving a question about the way MAFF discloses information.

MAFF explained that it did not reveal that the agreement was reached because coordination of views within the governments of both countries had yet to be undertaken as of Apr. 20. Matsuoka noted that he finally confirmed the agreement when he received a phone call from US Ambassador to Japan Schieffer on the afternoon of the 23rd, which was after the statement issued by Kobayashi.

Reflecting the criticism it received for its response to the first discovery of a BSE case in Japan in 2001, MAFF had pledged to promptly provide the public with information on food safety.

8) Japan, US to promote nuclear energy policy coordination; Japan to extend assistance to construction of nuclear power plants in US

TOKYO 00001843 006 OF 012

SANKEI (Page 9) (Excerpts)  
April 25, 2007

The governments of Japan and the United States announced yesterday that the two countries have adopted an action plan on bilateral nuclear energy policy coordination. The plan requires Japan's assistance to the planned construction of nuclear power plants in the US for the first time in 30 years and both countries' cooperation in establishing a system to ensure nuclear nonproliferation. Under the plan, the two countries will also conduct joint research on fast-breeder reactor technology in order

to translate into action the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) initiative announced by the Bush administration. The GNEP features resuming a nuclear fuel recycling program with the aim of curbing nuclear proliferation and preventing the dumping of radioactive waste. Japan and the US have also agreed to set up a working group to discuss such matters as fast-breeder reactor technology, ways to dispose of radioactive waste, and measures to protect nuclear materials. The two countries plan to set up the group in June and conduct joint studies on more complicated tasks after establishing a basic cooperative structure over one year.

9) Parliamentary group of revisionist lawmakers cancels visit to the US

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
April 25, 2007

Nariaki Nakayama, chair of the Parliamentary League to Consider Japan's Future and History Education, a group of lawmakers of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and other members of the league yesterday met with Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki and reported to him that the group cancelled a planned visit to the United States. The group had planned to visit the US later this month in order to lobby against a House bill calling on Prime Minister Abe to apologize for former comfort women. Nakayama said: "We wavered over the question of whether our visit to the US would have a good effect or a negative one. We have now concluded that the mood in Japan, including that of the media, was not necessarily good for our visit."

10) Government delegation, including Yokosuka City officials, to view nuclear disaster drill in US

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)  
April 25, 2007

It became known yesterday that a government delegation consisting of officials from Yokosuka City, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and other government bodies, who are consulting safety measures ahead of the planned deployment of the USS George Washington in the US Yokosuka Naval Base in Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Prefecture, is to observe a nuclear disaster drill to be carried out at a naval shipyard in the State of Washington in mid-May. It is unprecedented for the US military to make this sort of training "open" to another country, as US forces keep information about nuclear reactors on military ships classified as top secret.

The shipyard the Japanese delegation will inspect is the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard near Seattle. This shipyard is known for repair and maintenance of nuclear carriers and nuclear submarines, whose homeports are Bremerton and Everett nearby.

TOKYO 00001843 007 OF 012

The observation of the drill is scheduled for May 16. The details of the drill are unknown, but the drill is likely to be an actual exercise to see whether there are any problems about actions taken in line with the manual aimed at dealing with a disaster that occurred in the process of repairing nuclear reactor-related parts.

Joining the inspection tour will be working-level officials from the Japanese and US governments, the US Navy, and Yokosuka City, who are discussing safety measures in preparation for the Yokosuka base to be used as a homeport for a nuclear submarine to use the Yokosuka base as a homeport. The delegation is to travel to the US on May 13-18, observe the drill, and exchange views with local municipalities about such measures as the nuclear disaster prevention system.

On safety measures for nuclear ships, Yokosuka City and the US Navy in Japan have already concluded a disaster prevention pact that includes nuclear accidents. Both sides have continued consultations to create a "mutual assistance manual," which will specify in detail such things as a rescue system in the event of a nuclear accident and rescue operations. The results of the planned inspection will be used as a reference for the creation of the manual.

11) Leaked Aegis information spread to over 30 students from lieutenant, a former technical school instructor

SANKEI (Top play) (Abridged)  
April 25, 2007

The information on the Aegis system, including its pivotal data, taken out by a 33-year-old Maritime Self-Defense Force petty officer 2nd class, has spread because a 48-year-old lieutenant, a former instructor at the MSDF 1st Technical School (Edajima, Hiroshima Prefecture) allowed over 30 students to copy it before it finally found its way to the seaman in question, according to the Nakagawa prefectural police and an MSDF military police unit. The leaked information that included information classified as "special defense secrets" has again exposed the MSDF's low awareness of secrecy and

SIPDIS  
its lax information control.

A 43-year-old lt. commander who belonged to a program development division (already disbanded) responsible for maintaining and managing the system compiled the essential Aegis data that leaked. The data had been kept in files on his personal computer as teaching materials for senior officers.

The files were repeatedly copied and they reached a 30-year old petty officer 3rd class based at the destroyer Shirayuki of the Yokosuka District. The petty officer 2nd class copied his all files.

The two had been assigned to the same destroyer, the Hatsuyuki.

Consequent investigations found that the lieutenant, who used be an instructor at the 1st Technical School, possessed files identical to those compiled by the lt. commander. The lieutenant told investigators that he had allowed his students to copy them as educational materials. Investigators also found out that over 30 individuals, including his students, had copied the same files.

The petty officer 3rd class, who is unconnected with the technical

TOKYO 00001843 008 OF 012

school, is believed to have obtained the files that leaked to the students in one way or another.

The lieutenant indicated that he had no recollection of the source of the files. The 43-year-old lt. commander, who had also been a technical school instructor, also possessed the same files. Because the lieutenant did not have the files until the lt. commander arrived at the school, investigators believe that the files possessed by its producer were first copied by the lt. commander, who used work as an instructor.

12) Japan, US, China to participate in joint drills

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 25, 2007

Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Chinese navy will participate in multilateral maritime training exercises to be conducted in waters near Singapore on May 14-20, sources have revealed. The joint drills are planned for the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) sponsored by the Singaporean navy, and this is the first time for China to participate in WPNS sessions. The drills will involve 10 countries, including Japan, the United States, India, France, and Australia. The MSDF will promote mutual understanding with the naval forces of these participating countries through search and rescue training, target spotting and tracking training, and other training sessions.

13) Defense minister to reveal in US Japan's determination to maintain bilateral agreement on Futenma relocation

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 12) (Full)  
April 25, 2007

When he visits the United States later this month, Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma will relay Japan's policy of not altering the agreement reached in May of last year between Japan and the United States on the relocation of the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station. The agreement features the construction of a V-shaped pair of runways in a coastal area of Camp Schwab in Nago City. By revealing Japan's determination to steadily implement the final agreement on the realignment of US forces in Japan, Kyuma hopes to underline Japan's stance of giving priority to the Japan-US alliance.

Defense Minister Kyuma once indicated a flexible view about reviewing the coastal plan in response to a call from Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima. However, Kyuma, based on the judgment that a delay in implementing the bilateral agreement would have a negative impact on relations with the US, has now decided to reveal Japan's firm maintenance of the agreement during the upcoming 2+2 US-Japan security and foreign ministerial on May 1.

In the Japan-US summit set for April 27, as well, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Bush are expected to confirm a similar principle. The two countries plan to complete the Futenma coastal relocation plan in 2014. Officials concerned predict that it will take three years for environmental surveys and five years for the construction of barracks and other buildings.

14) Futenma relocation: Gov't begins preparations for sea probe

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Abridged)

TOKYO 00001843 009 OF 012

April 25, 2007

The government yesterday began preparations for probing waters in the offing of Camp Schwab, a US military base in Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, in order to push ahead with the planned relocation of the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in the central Okinawa city of Ginowan to a coastal area of the camp. Probing the sea has nothing to do with an environmental assessment survey that is legally required for the relocation of Futenma airfield. However, the government is now in the run-up to the Futenma relocation and will shortly conduct a full-fledged survey of the waters with Okinawa Prefecture's consent. The start of preparatory work is aimed at impressing the United States with the Japanese government's efforts to fulfill its agreement with the United States.

15) Deliberations on bill amending the Iraq Special Measures Law begin in Lower House

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Excerpts)  
April 25, 2007

An explanation of a bill aimed at extending the Iraq Special Measures Law, which is to expire at the end of July, for another two years was given at a Lower House plenary session yesterday and a question and answer session about the bill followed. Discussion on the bill has started. The ruling bloc intends to enact the bill into law as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, the major opposition party Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto or DPJ) has submitted a bill aimed at scrapping the Iraq Special Measures Law. Debates between the ruling and opposition parties are likely to hot up ahead of the upcoming Upper House election for this summer.

Japan has deployed some 200 Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) troops and three C-130 planes in Iraq. Kuwait has been used as their base for transportation from there to Iraq. Japan also has sent about 10 senior officers to the coalition force's air operation headquarters. Prime Minister Abe is to visit ASDF troops deployed in Kuwait on May 1 to encourage them.

In the question-and-answer session, Hideo Jinpu (of Minshuto) posed a question. In response, Abe said: "Preventing Iraq from serving as a breeding ground for terrorists and helping that country to recover as a peaceful and democratic country is meaningful in view of the stability of the international community and in the sense of meeting our country's national interests."



16) ASDF Iraq mission: Over 80% of travel used for airlifting coalition forces, possible aberration from basic plan centered on reconstruction assistance

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Top play) (Full)  
April 25, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in yesterday's Lower House plenary session to discuss an extension to the Iraq Special Measures Law revealed for the first time the contents of the Air Self-Defense Force's activities in Iraq, saying: "The ASDF has airlifted 46.5 tons of supplies on 150 occasions (since the Ground Self-Defense Force withdrew from the country last July). They airlifted 706 UN workers and 2.3 tons of UN supplies on 25 occasions."

This means that the remaining 125 flights, or 80% of the total, were

TOKYO 00001843 010 OF 012

for airlifting US-led coalition forces. Abe did not announce the number of people.

The basic plan stipulates that SDF activities must be centered on humanitarian and reconstruction assistance. The aerial transportation of personnel and supplies of international organizations, such as the United Nations, falls under this description.

A large number of flights for coalition forces points to the possibility of the ASDF mission's deviation from the basic plan.

Abe stressed that the airlifting of coalition forces has been conducted in line with the basic plan, saying: "Their activities constitute humanitarian and reconstruction assistance and security support."

A senior Defense Ministry official also explained: "The coalition forces have been engaged in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance as well." But it is believed that only a small portion of US troops in Iraq is conducting humanitarian and reconstruction assistance, with the great majority on security duties.

17) Government to allow country to exercise collective defense by reviewing its constitutional interpretation

SANKEI (Page 3) (Excerpts)  
April 25, 2007

The government decided yesterday to allow the country to exercise its right to collective self-defense, reviewing its constitutional interpretation that the country possesses that right but cannot exercise it, in connection with the ongoing plan to introduce a missile defense system to intercept incoming ballistic missiles. The Cabinet Legislation Bureau, which has been reluctant to change the government's interpretation, is showing a stance of approving it.

The government envisages four types of incidents to use the right: (1) intercepting a US-targeted ballistic missile with the MD system, (2) a counterattack by MSDF vessels in reaction to an attack on a US vessel navigating alongside them, (3) a counterattack following an attack on a multinational force sharing the mission, and (4) using weapons for eliminating obstacles during UN peacekeeping operations.

The government's expert council on collective defense is scheduled to set up taskforces on each category to flesh out the government's reinterpretation.

Members of the expert council

Yoko Iwama  
Associate professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies

Hisahiko Okazaki  
Former Ambassador to Thailand

Yoshiyuki Kasai  
Chairman of JR Tokai

Shinichi Kitaoka

TOKYO 00001843 011 OF 012

Professor at the University of Tokyo

Kazuya Sakamoto  
Professor at Osaka University graduate school

Masamori Sase  
Professor Emeritus at the Defense Academy

Ken Sato  
Former Vice Administrative Defense Minister

Akihiko Tanaka  
Professor at the University of Tokyo Institute of Oriental Culture

Hiroshi Nakanishi  
Professor at Kyoto University

Osamu Nishi  
Professor at Komazawa University

Tetsuya Nishimoto  
Former Joint Staff Council Chairman

Shinya Murase  
Professor at Sophia University

Shunji Yanai  
Former Ambassador to the United States

18) Prime Minister Abe outraged at Weekly Asahi article on  
assassination of Nagasaki mayor: "I'll resign if there is any  
connection"

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 25, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe late yesterday blasted a Weekly Asahi  
article (carried in its May 4-11 issue) for giving the impression  
that the assassination of the Nagasaki mayor was related to trouble  
involving the prime minister's secretary. Abe said: "It's a total  
fabrication. The reporter should be ashamed of writing such a thing.  
If my secretary and I were to have any connections with the shooter  
and his gang, I would resign as prime minister and a House of  
Representatives member." Abe strongly called on the Asahi Shimbun to  
apologize.

Abe was replying to reporters at the Prime Minister's Official  
Residence (Kantei). It was unprecedented for the prime minister to  
protest against media reporting by referring to his course of  
action.

Abe told reporters: "I was flabbergasted by the Weekly Asahi's  
advertisement. My secretary and I have families and relatives, and  
also children. This is an act of terrorism by means of speech and a  
political campaign aimed at (toppling my cabinet) instead of  
reporting the news."

The article titled "Links between the assassination of the Nagasaki  
mayor and Prime Minister Abe's secretary" quotes a senior National  
Police Agency official as saying that the shooting occurred while  
the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department was investigating the gang  
to which suspect Tetsuya Shiroyo belonged to for threatening Abe's

TOKYO 00001843 012 OF 012

former secretary without providing any information about this  
investigation to the Nagasaki Prefectural Police.

19) G-8 summit: Government picks Kyoto for foreign ministerial, Osaka for finance ministerial, Kobe for environment ministerial

SANKEI (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
April 25, 2007

The government yesterday chose Kyoto as the site for the foreign ministerial meeting, Osaka for the finance ministerial, and Kobe for the environment ministerial, all of which will be held on the occasion of the Group of Eight (G-8) summit next summer. The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) to be held next spring will be held in Yokohama.

The prime minister chose Toya Lake in Hokkaido as the site for the G-8 summit, but many other prefectural and municipal governments had announced their willingness to host the summit. Given this, the government picked different locations for the foreign, finance, and environment ministerial meetings.

DONOVAN